

## Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 OMB-01 ACDA-07 IO-13 DHA-02 CIAE-00

DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01

PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 EB-07 TRSE-00 /086 W

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P R 220931Z NOV 76

FM AMEMBASSY SEOUL

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0638

INFO AMEMBASSY TOKYO

CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 SEOUL 9257

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, KS

SUBJECT: ASSEMBLYMEN PROBE ROK CABINET ON U.S. COMMITMENT AND  
NORMAL DOMESTIC ISSUES

REF: SEOUL 8842 (DTG041024Z NOV 76)

SUMMARY. ON NOVEMBER 18 THROUGH 20, DURING THREE CONSECUTIVE SESSIONS OF NATIONAL ASSEMBLY'S BUDGET SETTLEMENT COMMITTEE HEARINGS, ROKG CABINET RESPONDED TO SERIES OF SHARP, PROBING QUESTIONS FROM FLOOR ON RESOLUTENESS OF U.S. COMMITMENT TO KOREA, BOTH NOW AND IN FORTHCOMING CARTER ADMINISTRATION, AND BRIEFLY ON PAK TONG-SON ALLEGED BRIBERY SCANDAL. BULK OF COMMITTEE BUSINESS WAS RESERVED FOR INTERPELLATION OF CABINET ON NORMAL NATIONAL DOMESTIC ISSUES, HOWEVER, AND SESSION PROCEEDED FAIRLY SMOOTHLY. ROKG OFFICIALS REAFFIRMED U.S. MILITARY SUPPORT, NOTING THAT MORAL STANDARDS OFTEN DIFFER BETWEEN COUNTRIES. PRIMIN NOTED THAT IT WAS TOO EARLY TO PREDICT CARTER ADMINISTRATION POLICY ON KOREAN DOMESTIC ISSUES. PRESS GENERALLY CARRIED FULL COVERAGE OF DEBATE WHICH, IN TOTO, WAS AT TIMES POINTED BUT SHORT OF ACRIMONIOUS. END SUMMARY.

1. ON NOVEMBER 18, 19, AND 20, DURING MEETINGS OF FORTY-  
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MAN BUDGET SETTLEMENT COMMITTEE AT NATIONAL ASSEMBLY,

OPPOSITION (AND SOME RULING) PARTY MEMBERS ALIKE SHARPLY QUESTIONED ROKG CABINET, ASSEMBLED EN MASSE, ON VARIETY OF SUBJECTS INCLUDING EFFECTS OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND BRIBERY SCANDAL PROBLEMS ON CONSTANCY OF U.S. MILITARY COMMITMENT TO KOREA. PRESS SOURCES TOLD EMBOFF THAT QUESTIONS, PARTICULARLY ON FIRST DAY, WERE NOT PARTICULARLY ARGUMENTATIVE BUT POSED IN TERMS OF SEARCH FOR WHAT IN ROK'S BEST INTEREST. BY SECOND DAY, HOWEVER, ONE OPPOSITION ASSEMBLYMAN HAD DELIVERED ENOUGH BARBS INDIRECTLY COMPARING ROK AND CHILE, SO THAT DRP AND YUCHONGHOE ORDERED REMARKS STRICKEN FROM RECORD. USE OF BUDGET SETTLEMENT COMMITTEE AS FORUM FOR FAR-RANGING POLITICAL QUESTIONS IS NOT ALL THAT NOVEL BUT THIS SESSION WAS NOTABLE IN THAT QUESTIONS ZEROED IN OCCASIONALLY ON ROKG'S RESPONSE TO U.S. PRESIDENT-ELECT; KOREAN HUMAN RIGHTS AND CARTER; AND U.S. BRIBERY SCANDALS.

2. US/ROK RELATIONS SERVED AS MAJOR FOCUS OF QUESTIONS. NDP'S YI CHIN-YON ASKED HOW ROKG WOULD FARE IF U.S. LINKED ITS DEFENSE COMMITMENT, INCLUDING WITHDRAWAL OF MILITARY FORCES, TO CALLS FOR IMPROVEMENT IN ROK DOMESTIC HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION. THEN IN ONE HOUR INTERPELLATION, NDP'S OM YONG-TAL PRESENTED BALANCED, HARD-HITTING REVIEW OF RECENTLY REPORTED ALLEGED BRIBERY SCANDAL IN U. ., BUT LIKE ASSEMBLYMAN O SE-UNG, (REFTEL), DID NOT ADDRESS ALLEGED BLUE HOUSE EVESDROPPING BY U.S. OM AGREED THAT FACTORS IN FAVOR OF U.S. CONTINUING TO MEET ITS COMMITMENT FAR OUTWEIGHED NEGATIVE FACTORS BUT SAID ROK SHOULD INSURE THAT "UNPLEASANT DEVELOPMENTS" SUCH AS PAK TONG-SON AND PAK PO-HI ALLEGED BRIBERY ACTIVITIES WERE NOT REPEATED. FONMIN RESPONDED THAT IT WAS IMPORTANT FOR U.S. AND KOREA TO PROTECT AND PROMOTE COMMON INTERESTS BY SMOOTHING OVER ANY DIVVERENCES. WHEN SPECIFICALLY QUESTIONED ABOUT "MORAL STANDARDS" OF PRESIDENT-ELECT VIS-A-VIS KOREA, FONMIN SAID "MORAL VALUES DIFFER IN CONTENT AND STANDARDS ACCORDING TO COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES." "AMERICA HAS ITS (OWN) MORAL VALUES," HE SAID, " AND WE HAVE OURS," ADDING THAT CARTER HAD INDICATED DURING CAMPAIGN THAT U.S. WOULD NOT ATTEMPT TO ENCROACH ON ANOTHER COUNTRY'S SOVEREIGNTY.

3. DESPITE ROKG RESPONSE ON NOVEMBER 18, NDP ASSEMBLYMAN KIM CHANG-HWAN RAISED SAME QUESTION ON FOLLOWING DAY, CONFIDENTIAL

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ASKING WHAT COUNTER-MEASURES ROKG WOULD TAKE IF U.S. FORCES WERE TO BE WITHDRAWN. KIM ALSO NOTED THAT CARTER THREAT TO WITHDRAW AID TO CHILE HAD APPARENTLY LED TO RELEASE OF CHILEAN "POLITICAL PRISONERS". WHEN KIM WONDERED ALOUD IF ROKG RESPONSE TO CARTER MIGHT BE A SIMILAR STEP, YUCHONGHOE MEMBERS LEFT COMMITTEE ROOM IN PROTEST BUT SOON RETURNED. KIM'S REMARKS WERE SUBSEQUENTLY DELETED FROM COMMITTEE RECORD. (SOME ASSEMBLYMEN ARE STILL CALLING FOR

DISCIPLINARY ACTION BUT FIRST REPORTS INDICATE SUCH PUNISHMENT UNLIKELY.) PRIME MINISTER PERSONALLY RESPONDED TO KIM, STATING IT WAS MUCH TOO EARLY TO SPECULATE ABOUT POSSIBLE U.S. POLICY CHANGES. HE ADMITTED SPECULATION WAS RIFE BUT STATED THAT ROKG DID NOT FEEL IT NECESSARY TO SEND ROK DELEGATION TO MEET WITH CARTER ADMINISTRATION AT THIS TIME. HE WARNED POINTEDLY, HOWEVER, THAT "DISCUSSIONS OF FUTURE AMERICAN POLICY AT THIS STAGE IS HARMFUL TO NATIONAL INTEREST." HE ALSO STIFFLY WARNED FOREIGNERS NOT TO INTERFERE IN INTERNAL ROK AFFAIRS.

4. FONMIN PAK TONG-CHIN WAS ASKED IF U.S. MIGHT "STRIKE UP DIRECT DIALOGUE WITH NORTH AS RESULT OF U.S. PLACING TOO MUCH EMPHASIS ON FORGING FRIENDLY RELATIONS WITH RED CHINA." PAK'S RESPONSE WAS ONLY THAT CARTER HAD MAINTAINED IN HIS CAMPAIGN THAT U.S. COMMITMENTS WOULD CONTINUE TO BE HONORED.

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5. BOTH FONMIN AND NATIONAL DEFENSE MINISTER SO CHONG-CHOL WERE ASKED WHETHER FORD-CARTER TRANSITION PERIOD WOULD PROVE TO BE LEADERSHIP VACUUM IN WHICH NORTH MIGHT ATTACK SOUTH. RESPONSES FROM BOTH CABINET MEMBERS VARIED TO SOME EXTENDT. FONMIN SAID "IT WAS NOT LIKELY THAT (NORTH) WOULD PROVOKE SUCH AN INCIDENT" AT THIS TIME. WHEN SO TOOK QUESTION, HOWEVER, HE REINFORCED TRADITIONAL ROK LINE THAT

"THERE IS LIKELIHOOD THAT NORTH MIGHT PROFIT FROM UNCERTAINTIES DURING THIS PERIOD" BUT THAT ROK/US RESOLUTION WAS STEADFAST AS EVER. HE ALSO SAID THAT US/ROK MILITARY WOULD JOINTLY TAKE RESOLUTE COUNTER-MEASURES REGARDLESS OF PLACE OR TIME SHOULD NORTH KOREA PROVOKE ANOTHER INCIDENT LIKE ONE OF AUGUST 18. (COMMENT: WE ARE ATTEMPTING OBTAIN EXACT WORDING THIS LATTER REMARK).

6. THREE DAYS OF COMMITTEE INTERPELLATION BY NO MEANS FOCUSSED ENTIRELY ON U.S. COMMITMENT QUESTIONS. BULK OF QUESTIONS IN FACT WAS DIRECTLY RELATED TO BUDGET AND DOMESTIC AFFAIRS. TOPICS INCLUDED NEED FOR HALTING PRICE INCREASE IN TOURIST AREAS, GOVERNMENT POLICY TOWARD FISHING BOATS PARTIALLY DAMAGED IN RECENT EASTERN SEA STORMS, AND WHETHER GOVERNMENT POLICY ALLEGEDLY FAVORING MAJOR TRADING COMPANIES, TO POSSIBLE DETRIMENT OF MEDIUM AND SMALL INDUSTRIES, SHOULD BE EXAMINED AND/OR IMPROVED. VARIOUS OTHER TOPICS WERE POLLUTION IN CITIES, CONFIDENTIAL

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DEVELOPMENT OF AUTO INDUSTRY, AND CALLS FOR REDUCED INEFFICIENCY IN GOVERNMENT. IN FOREIGN POLICY AREA, QUESTIONS WERE RAISED CONCERNING REPARTITION OF SAKHALIN-BASED KOREANS.

7. BOTH RULIN AND OPPOSITION ASSEMBLYMEN WERE REPORTEDLY WELL-SATISFIED WITH INTERPELLATIONS. NDP FLOOR LEADER SONG WON-YONG COMPLAINED THAT THREE DAYS WAS INSUFFICIENT FOR IN-DEPTH INQUIRIES ON KOREAN SECURITY SITUATION AND OTHER IMPORTANT QUESTIONS, BUT NDP'S HAN PYONG-CHAE INDICATED THAT MOST ISSUES WHICH COULD BE HAD AT LEAST BEEN RAISED. BUDGET-SETTLEMENT COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN AND DRP OFFICIALS COMPLAINED THAT NDP FLOOR LEADER, NTO ASSIGNED TO BUDGET-SETTLEMENT COMMITTEE, HAD BEEN TOO VOCAL AND WORRIED THAT OPPOSITION QUESTIONS GAVE IMPRESSION THAT (NDP) WAS EXCESSIVELY SUBSERVIENT TO FOREIGN (READ AMERICAN AND JAPANESE) PUBLIC OPINION BUT AT SAME TIME CONCLUDED DRP HAD MADE GOOD DEFENSE OF ROKG POLICIES. ROKG ADMINISTRATION SOURCES AGREED THAT ON WHOLE INTERPELLATIONS HAD GOVE WELL WITH TOUGH QUESTIONS, "WITHIN BOUNDS", AND GOOD ANSWERS. AS MOFA AMERICAN BUREAU CHIEF PUT IT "THE TONE OF THE QUESTIONS WAS SHARPER THAN IN PAST TWO YEARS. WE EARNED OUR PAY UP THERE BUT THIS IS AS IT SHOULD BE."

8. LOCAL PRESS CARRIED INTERPELLATIONS IN SOME DETAILS, ALTHOUGH IT OMITTED EVERYTHING BUT VAGUE REFERENCES TO ALLEGED BRIBERY SCANDAL IN U.S.

9. ASSEMBLY SCHEDULE CALLS FOR DISCUSSION AND APPROVAL OF BUDGET TO BE COMPLETED BY NOVEMBER 27. UNTIL THEN, MEETINGS WILL BE DEVOTED TO EXAMINING BUDGET, ITEM BY ITEM, MINISTRY

BY MINISTRY, BEGINNING ON NOVEMBER 22 WITH FOREIGN  
AFFAIRS AND NATIONAL DEFENSE QUESTIONS. FINAL PLENARY  
SESSION PRIOR TO ASSEMBLY'S CLOSING WILL BEGIN  
AFTER NOVEMBER 27.  
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## Message Attributes

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